

## MARYLAND BRIEFING

### Plan Would Use Housing Fund To Help Homeless Find Shelter

Montgomery County Council President Mike Knapp (D-Upcounty) and council member George Leventhal (D-At Large) proposed a new approach yesterday to helping the county's homeless find permanent shelter.

Under their plan, \$4 million from the county's Housing Initiative Fund, a pool of money that uses property tax revenue to preserve or pay for affordable housing, would be allocated to develop affordable housing or to provide

rental subsidies for homeless people. The money could also pay for programs to ensure people don't fall back into homelessness.

The idea, Knapp said, is to place people in permanent shelter rather than continue to shuttle them from temporary home to temporary home.

Because funding for the program would come from an existing pool of money, no additional funds would have to be allocated in the fiscal 2009 budget, they said. At a time when the county faces a \$400 million budget shortfall, that could be important to winning council support for the proposal.

In future years, Leventhal and Knapp propose that no less than 10 percent of the total Housing Initiative Fund be devoted to housing for the very lowest income residents of the county. The \$4 million proposal they propose for 2009 is about 10 percent of the Housing Initiative Fund.

— Lori Aratani